

The Role of Qodiriyah wa Naqsyabandiyah Thoriqoh Education for Elderly People at Nurul Ali Islamic Boarding School, Sempu Ngadirojo, Secang, Magelang

Ahmad Nur Islakh^{*)}¹, Imam Anas Hadi², Ida Zahara Adibah³

¹Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman Kab. Semarang, Indonesia; islakh@gmail.com

²Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman Kab. Semarang, Indonesia; anashadi@gmail.com

³Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman Kab. Semarang, Indonesia; idazaharaadibah@gmail.com

^{*)}Corresponding author; E-mail addresses: islakh@gmail.com

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Abstract. This research is motivated by the phenomenon of an increasing number of elderly people seeking spiritual peace in their old age through Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Nurul Ali Sempu Islamic Boarding School in Magelang serves as one of the Islamic education centers focusing on coaching the elderly through the teachings of Thoriqoh Qodiriyah wa Naqsyabandiyah (Thariqah Qadriyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah). This study aims to describe and analyze the role of Thariqah Qadriyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah education in enhancing the spiritual and mental quality of life for the elderly, as well as to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors of the educational process. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with the mentors (mursyid/badal), administrators, and elderly students (santri), along with documentation studies. Data analysis

was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data was tested using source and technique triangulation. The results of the study indicate that Thariqah Qadriyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah education at Nurul Ali Islamic Boarding School plays a central role in three main aspects for the elderly. First, the Spiritual Aspect: through the practice of dhikr jahir and khafi, the elderly experience a closeness to Allah SWT, which impacts their readiness to face death (husnul khotimah). Second, the Psychological Aspect: thoriqoh education serves as mental therapy that reduces anxiety, loneliness, and stress (post-power syndrome) in old age. Third, the Social Aspect: the pesantren becomes a space for healthy social interaction, allowing the elderly to feel a sense of community and moral support. Supporting factors for this education include intensive guidance from the mursyid and a calm rural environment, while the inhibiting factors include the declining physical condition of the elderly in following a dense schedule of activities.

Introduction

Amid the rapid pace of modernization, education has become a fundamental necessity inherent in human life. Advances in science and technology require every individual to continuously develop their abilities in order to adapt to ongoing social, economic, and cultural changes. This condition has given rise to the concept of lifelong education, a perspective that emphasizes that learning is both a right and a necessity for every human being from birth until the end of life. This concept highlights that learning experiences are not limited to formal educational institutions but occur continuously through individuals' interactions with their social environment. Lifelong education, as a new paradigm, carries important implications for increasing individuals' awareness

to learn independently, actively, and continuously in acquiring knowledge and new experiences, without being constrained by space and time (Rofiq 20022).

Lifelong learning is the idea that the learning process continues uninterrupted and does not stop at any particular stage of life, beginning at birth and lasting until the end of a person's life, in accordance with human developmental stages. Within the framework of Islamic education, this principle is intended to help individuals achieve higher educational goals, namely forming personalities that are spiritually, morally, and intellectually mature, enabling them to live with piety and attain happiness both in this world and in the hereafter. Islam encourages continuous learning because knowledge is considered a necessity not limited by age or formal levels, and it is closely related to character formation and self-perfection throughout the human life cycle (Muhammad Hizbullah 2024).

Various ideas about the learning process initially emerged from the view that education functions as a means of transmitting culture from one generation to the next. From this perspective, the term pedagogy was born, originally referring to the art and science of teaching children, but later developing into a general term used to describe the art and science of teaching and guiding learners. In the modern context, social and technological changes occur so rapidly that knowledge acquired at one stage of life may become less relevant or obsolete after several decades due to dynamic social, economic, and technological changes. This condition renders the traditional educational paradigm, which positions educators as the sole source of knowledge, insufficient. Consequently, the focus of education has shifted from merely transmitting knowledge to encouraging individuals to continuously discover, renew, and develop their knowledge throughout life in order to remain relevant to the demands of the times. In the era of continuous learning, individuals not only receive knowledge but also actively construct, evaluate, and expand it from various sources throughout their lives (Dannur 2024).

Over the past twenty years, experts in adult education in Europe, America, and Asia have developed a distinct learning method that differentiates it from conventional pedagogical approaches used for children. This approach is known as andragogy, defined as the art and science of helping adults learn. The term "andragogy" was first used by Alexander Kapp, a German educator, in 1833 when discussing adult education in the context of classical philosophical thought. After fading from use, the term was revived in the early 20th century by Eugene Rosenstock-Huussy, who emphasized that adult education requires different teachers, methods, and philosophies compared to child education. Subsequently, figures such as Malcolm Knowles in the United States further developed andragogy into a more established theory of adult learning since the 1970s, based on the principle that adults learn independently, draw on life experiences, and are more focused on problem-solving rather than passively receiving knowledge. Andragogy clearly differs from pedagogy, which focuses on teaching children and adolescents, as adult education emphasizes awareness, independence, and relevance to their own needs within a broader life context (Muhammad Hizbullah 2024).

From the perspective of lifelong education, the concept of andragogy reinforces that the learning process does not stop for adults or the elderly. Islam even views education as an obligation without age limits, as the primary goal of Islamic education is the formation of noble character (akhlaqul karimah) and personal perfection. This awareness positions every individual as a lifelong learner, including adults and the elderly, so that they remain engaged in acquiring knowledge and new experiences throughout their lives, not only during childhood and adolescence. Elderly individuals also have the right to education as stipulated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 13 of 1998 concerning Elderly Welfare. This law grants older adults the right to improve their social welfare, including access to education and training services. With proper access to education and training, it is expected that the elderly can become independent and productive individuals, thereby not becoming a burden on themselves, their families, or society. The obligation

of the government and society to provide such services reflects a commitment to empowering the elderly in various aspects of life (Dr. Ir. Indra Iskandar 2020).

The idea of lifelong education is also aligned with Islamic teachings that position learning as an obligation not limited by age. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized this through the saying: “Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave,” indicating that seeking knowledge is a lifelong process and not limited to formal classrooms, but can take place anywhere and at any time throughout human life (Ningsih 2024). This is also affirmed in the words of Allah SWT in QS. Ar-Rūm verse 54, which explains that humans are created through stages of life alternating between weakness and strength. The verse illustrates that humans begin in a weak state from the process of creation through childhood and adolescence, then enter a phase of strength in adulthood, before eventually experiencing physical and psychological decline in old age, marked by graying hair and weakening bodily functions. This life journey reflects a natural and inevitable law of human development. In the early phase, humans grow toward strength, while in the later phase, there is a decline in physical functions and internal conditions. Therefore, the physical and psychological changes experienced by the elderly require special attention in the form of healthcare services, social support, and fulfillment of spiritual needs to maintain their overall quality of life.

Islamic religious education is not limited to children but is also obligatory for adults and even the elderly, as the obligation to seek knowledge knows no age limit. However, in practice, educational services specifically designed for the elderly are still rare, including in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and other Islamic educational institutions. In fact, the physical and psychological conditions of the elderly, which decline with age, require carefulness, diligence, and patience in the teaching and learning process (Dr. Ir. Indra Iskandar 2020). Cognitive decline and reduced memory capacity often make it difficult for elderly learners to absorb new material, especially in connecting past knowledge with new information. This decline means that elderly learners need more time to absorb and retain lessons (Pragholapati, Ardiana, and Nurlianawati 2021).

In addition, the learning process for the elderly is influenced by several factors, including physiological factors (declining physical and sensory conditions), psychological factors (motivation, emotions, and self-confidence), learning environment factors (class atmosphere, facilities, and social support), and instructional delivery factors (methods, media, and teaching strategies) that must be designed to suit the needs and characteristics of older learners. A sensitive approach to these characteristics is essential to ensure that learning for the elderly is effective and meaningful (Samsudin 2020).

In later life, a person's orientation is generally no longer focused on material worldly achievements but rather on utilizing the remaining time to draw closer to Allah SWT, with the hope of achieving a good end of life (khusnul khotimah). Therefore, instilling the spirit of strengthening faith and piety becomes a crucial need for the elderly as preparation for the certainty of death. Islam views life as a trust and a blessing from Allah SWT, requiring humans not only to be grateful but also to prepare spiritually for the end of life. In this context, fulfilling the needs of the elderly must be balanced between physical and spiritual aspects, as both are interconnected in maintaining overall quality of life (Khotimah et al. 2024).

Humans are created with two main dimensions physical and spiritual which interact in shaping behavior and life orientation. As individuals reach intellectual maturity, these dimensions generate various drives and desires that often conflict. Spiritual drives tend to guide individuals toward goodness, self-control, and morally valuable actions, while physical drives often encourage the pursuit of worldly pleasures. This tension frequently leads to inner conflict. Therefore, conscious efforts are needed to regulate, train, and purify the soul (tazkiyatun nafs) so that spiritual drives can guide physical impulses in a balanced manner (Zulkifli, Syaifuddin 2024).

Every human being has the obligation to return to Allah SWT through repentance when committing mistakes, accompanied by a strong commitment not to repeat them. This attitude is considered a righteous deed, rewarded by Allah SWT with a good life, and even multiplied rewards up to tenfold as a manifestation of His mercy. Allah SWT has endowed humans with desires (shahwat), which can serve as energy to drive individuals toward worship and the path pleasing to Him. However, in reality, these impulses are not always easy to control. When desires dominate, the heart can become unstable and lose balance, affecting thoughts, speech, and actions, potentially diminishing their goodness (Zulkifli, Syaifuddin 2024). As stated by Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani, the human heart is fundamentally oriented toward Allah SWT. Therefore, to function according to its purpose, the heart must be purified from reprehensible traits and actions not pleasing to Allah. A corrupted heart produces bad deeds, while a pure heart gives rise to righteous actions. This principle aligns with the Prophet Muhammad's saying that within the human body is a piece of flesh; if it is good, the whole body is good, and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted the heart (Ramadhan 2018).

Furthermore, scholars of Sufism explain that the human heart is dynamic and ever-changing. It may be in a good state at one time and weaken at another before improving again. Therefore, continuous spiritual practice is necessary to maintain and improve the heart's condition. One such practice is the observance of thariqah, which serves as a means of spiritual training and controlling desires to keep the heart directed toward goodness and closeness to Allah SWT (Nasr 2019).

In the Sufi tradition, thariqah is understood as a spiritual path that inherently contains elements of soul education. The educational system within a tarekat has a unique structure, where the mursyid acts as a spiritual teacher, followers as learners, and the practices of the tarekat as the learning material to be consistently applied. Essentially, education in the tarekat is a form of spiritual education focused on inner development. Experts believe that the essence of humanity lies in the spiritual aspect, as outward behavior reflects inner conditions. A corrupted spirit leads to negative behavior, while a purified spirit leads to righteous deeds. Thus, educating the soul is essentially educating the core of human existence, influencing all aspects of life (Sholikhin et al., 2023).

The selection of the elderly as the subject of this study is based on the characteristics of old age, where life orientation shifts from material achievements to seeking closeness to Allah SWT. The main hope at this stage is to achieve a good ending (khusnul khotimah). Therefore, strengthening faith and piety becomes essential as spiritual preparation for death. Islam views life as a blessing that must be lived consciously while preparing for its end. In this context, fulfilling the needs of the elderly must balance physical and spiritual aspects to maintain overall quality of life (Saputra 2024).

This research is planned to take place at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ali, located in Sempu Village, Payaman District, Magelang Regency. The selection of this location is based on its unique characteristic of providing learning activities specifically for elderly practitioners of dhikr in the Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah. Additionally, this pesantren is known as one of the oldest Islamic boarding schools in Lampung Province. Another uniqueness lies in the dedication system of its educators. Teachers and ustaz do not receive salaries but continue to serve sincerely, motivated by deep respect (ta'dim) for their teachers rather than material rewards.

The pesantren is led by the son of KH. Nurul Ali, a prominent scholar in Payaman and a mursyid of the Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah, who also served in the central board of Nahdlatul Ulama. Its graduates have spread across Central Java, and the number of students reaches hundreds, with increased activity during anniversaries and imtihan events (Habib 2022). In any scientific study within the same domain, new research never stands alone; it always has conceptual and thematic connections with previous studies. These connections are important to demonstrate the position, contribution, and differences of the research compared to earlier works.

One relevant study is a thesis titled *Meaning of Life of Thariqah Practitioners (Case Study of Thariqah Practitioners at Pondok Pesantren Sabilurrosyad, Gasek, Karangbesuki, Sukun, Malang)*, conducted at the Faculty of Psychology, State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, which examines the meaning of life of thariqah practitioners from a psychological perspective (Khaoro 2020).

Based on this review, this discussion aims to clarify the position of research on the implementation of andragogical learning theory among elderly practitioners of dhikr in the Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah within pesantren environments. This clarification is intended to systematically highlight differences in focus, approach, and scientific contribution compared to previous studies. Based on the background described above, the researcher is motivated to examine more deeply the process of adult education as practiced in the dhikr activities of the Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah within Islamic boarding schools. This research is expected not only to remain at the conceptual level but also to reveal how the process is practically implemented in the lives of the elderly.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the implementation of Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah education among elderly learners at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ali. The study was conducted in Ngadirojo Village, Secang District, Magelang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, with prolonged engagement through participation in religious activities such as dzikir, manaqib, and kholwat to gain contextual understanding. The research subjects were elderly students aged 60 years and above who actively participated in thariqah learning activities. Participants were selected using purposive sampling with criteria including active involvement and a minimum of six months of participation. Supporting informants included the mursyid, teachers, and, when necessary, family members. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved. The researcher acted as the primary instrument through direct involvement in the research setting while maintaining reflexivity. Data were collected through documentation and literature review, including primary texts on Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah and supporting secondary sources. Data validity was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Conclusions were based on recurring patterns, consistency of findings, and relevance to the research objectives, and were verified iteratively to ensure validity.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of *Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah* education at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ali constitutes a comprehensive and integrative model of adult learning, particularly for elderly participants. The learning process is not limited to cognitive knowledge transfer but extends to spiritual transformation, psychological stabilization, and social integration. These findings are discussed based on three interconnected dimensions: conceptual foundations, learning processes and impacts, and contextual factors influencing implementation.

1. Conceptual Foundation of Thariqah Learning: Transformative and Experiential Education

The results indicate that the concept of learning in *Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah* is fundamentally transformative rather than merely instructional. The educational process emphasizes internalization of values through lived experience, role modeling, and continuous

spiritual practice. Religious instructors (*murayid*) do not rely on directive teaching but instead embody the values they wish to instill, allowing learners to observe, reflect, and gradually internalize these values in their daily lives.

This approach reflects a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered paradigms, which is consistent with contemporary theories of adult learning. According to andragogical principles, adult learners tend to reject authoritarian instruction and instead prefer approaches that respect their autonomy, experiences, and personal meaning-making processes. The reliance on exemplary behavior rather than direct admonition in this study demonstrates a culturally and pedagogically appropriate adaptation to the characteristics of elderly learners.

In addition, the structured cultivation of affection toward *dzikir* emerges as a central learning strategy. The findings reveal that understanding the meaning, purpose, and benefits of *dzikir* fosters emotional attachment, which in turn leads to habitual and consistent practice. This suggests that learning effectiveness is closely tied to affective engagement, not merely cognitive comprehension. From a theoretical perspective, this supports the argument that adult learning is intrinsically motivated and purpose-driven. Elderly participants in this study engage in learning not as an obligation but as a conscious effort to achieve spiritual fulfillment and existential meaning. This distinguishes adult education in religious contexts from formal education systems, where motivation is often externally regulated.

2. Spiritual Transformation and Psychological Stabilization

A major finding of this study is the significant impact of *thariqah* learning on the spiritual transformation of elderly participants. Regular and structured *dzikir* practices both *jahr* (loud) and *khafī* (silent) facilitate the development of spiritual awareness, inner calmness, and a sense of closeness to God. Participants reported experiencing a deeper sense of purpose and increased readiness to face death (*khusnul khotimah*), indicating that the learning process successfully addresses existential concerns commonly associated with aging. This finding is consistent with Sufi educational theory, which conceptualizes *thariqah* as a path of spiritual refinement (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and inner transformation. Unlike conventional educational models, which focus on knowledge acquisition, *thariqah* education prioritizes the purification of the heart (*qalb*) as the core of human behavior and consciousness.

Moreover, this result aligns with psychological theories of aging, which suggest that individuals in later life stages tend to shift their orientation from material achievements to existential and spiritual concerns. Scholars such as William James and Jalaluddin have emphasized that religious experiences often become more profound in old age due to increased introspection and reduced external distractions. Therefore, the effectiveness of *thariqah* learning can be understood as its alignment with the natural developmental trajectory of elderly individuals.

From a psychological perspective, the study also reveals that *dzikir* functions as a mechanism for emotional regulation and stress reduction. The repetitive and rhythmic nature of *dzikir* creates a meditative effect that helps alleviate anxiety, loneliness, and fear of death. This is particularly significant given that elderly individuals often experience psychological distress due to declining physical health, loss of social roles, and increased awareness of mortality (Supartini, 2020). Thus, *thariqah* education serves not only as a religious practice but also as a form of spiritual therapy that enhances psychological resilience. This finding extends previous research by demonstrating that religious practices can play a functional role in mental health, particularly in aging populations.

3. Social Integration and Collective Learning

In addition to spiritual and psychological dimensions, this study highlights the significant social impact of *thariqah* education. The pesantren environment provides a supportive community where elderly participants can engage in meaningful social interactions through collective activities such as group *dzikir*, discussions, and religious gatherings. These interactions foster a strong sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation, which are common challenges in later life. From a sociological perspective, this finding is consistent with theories of successful aging, which emphasize the importance of social engagement in maintaining well-being (Wisnusakti & Sriati, 2021).

Furthermore, the implementation of various learning methods including participatory, demonstrative, discussion-based, and lecture approaches enhances the effectiveness of the educational process. Each method serves a specific function: participatory learning encourages active engagement, demonstration provides concrete understanding, discussion fosters critical thinking, and lectures deliver structured knowledge. The integration of these methods reflects a flexible and adaptive learning system that accommodates the diverse needs and capabilities of elderly learners. This supports the argument that effective adult education requires methodological diversity and contextual sensitivity. Interestingly, the combination of collective learning and spiritual practice creates a unique educational environment where learning is both individual and communal. Participants not only develop personal understanding but also contribute to shared knowledge construction, reinforcing both cognitive and social learning outcomes.

4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors: Explaining Variations

The effectiveness of *thariqah* learning is influenced by several supporting factors. The presence of a *murayid* as a central figure in the learning process plays a crucial role in guiding, motivating, and facilitating learners. This aligns with Sufi educational traditions, where the teacher-student relationship is based on trust, respect, and continuous guidance. Additionally, the pesantren environment itself serves as a conducive learning setting. The religious atmosphere, structured routines, and communal values support the internalization of spiritual practices and enhance learner engagement.

However, the study also identifies several inhibiting factors, primarily related to the physical and cognitive limitations of elderly learners. Declining memory, reduced sensory abilities, and slower information processing pose challenges to the learning process. Despite these limitations, the findings suggest that such challenges can be mitigated through appropriate teaching strategies, such as simplifying language, using repetition, and emphasizing experiential learning. This contrasts with some previous studies that view cognitive decline as a major barrier to elderly education. Instead, this study demonstrates that meaningful and contextually relevant learning can overcome such limitations.

The findings of this study contribute to the development of adult education theory by demonstrating that spiritual-based learning can serve as an effective model for elderly education. Unlike conventional approaches that focus primarily on cognitive outcomes, *thariqah* education integrates spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions, resulting in a more holistic learning experience. From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the relevance of andragogy in religious education contexts, showing that adult learning principles can be naturally embedded in traditional spiritual practices. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that educational programs for the elderly should prioritize meaningful engagement, emotional relevance, and social interaction rather than purely instructional content. Religious institutions, such as pesantren, have the potential to play a significant role in providing such holistic educational experiences.

This study concludes that the implementation of *Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah* education at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ali represents a comprehensive and transformative model of lifelong learning for the elderly. The learning process integrates spiritual practices, psychological support, and social interaction, resulting in enhanced spiritual awareness, emotional stability, and social well-being. The findings confirm that *thariqah*-based education aligns with andragogical principles, particularly in terms of intrinsic motivation, experiential learning, and relevance to life goals. Although physical and cognitive limitations pose challenges, these can be effectively addressed through adaptive and context-sensitive learning strategies. Therefore, *thariqah* education offers a holistic and relevant approach to elderly education, particularly within the framework of Islamic lifelong learning, and holds potential for broader application in community-based adult education programs.

Conclusion

Based on the results and analysis of the study on the role of *Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah* education for the elderly at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ali Sempu, several conclusions can be drawn in accordance with the research objectives. First, the concept of learning for the elderly in religious activities at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ali is grounded in the principle of lifelong education integrated with Sufi values (Hadi, 2018). The learning process is designed by considering the psychological, spiritual, and social characteristics of elderly learners. Conceptually, the approach reflects andragogical principles, emphasizing learners' life experiences, addressing their current spiritual needs, and orienting learning toward meaning-making and preparation for the end of life. In this framework, the elderly are positioned not merely as objects of instruction but as active subjects engaged in self-purification (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and spiritual closeness to Allah SWT.

Second, the implementation of *Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah* learning at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ali is conducted systematically under the guidance of a *mursyid*, with structured practices including *dzikir jahr*, *dzikir khafi*, recitation of *wirid*, religious instruction, and character development. The educational process takes place in a conducive religious environment, emphasizing role modeling, habituation, and intensive spiritual mentoring. This learning model is not limited to the transfer of religious knowledge but focuses on inner transformation and the formation of religious character. Thus, *thariqah* education in this context functions as a continuous and practice-oriented form of spiritual education.

Third, the learning of *Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah* among elderly practitioners provides significant impacts on their spiritual, psychological, and social lives. Spiritually, participants experience increased inner peace, a stronger connection with Allah SWT, and greater readiness to face death with the hope of achieving *husnul khatimah*. Psychologically, *dzikir* practices and *thariqah* guidance function as a form of mental therapy, reducing anxiety, loneliness, and emotional distress commonly experienced in old age. Socially, the *pesantren* serves as a space for interaction that fosters a sense of belonging and mutual support among elderly participants, thereby improving their overall quality of life.

Overall, *Thariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah* education at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ali can be viewed as a Sufism-based Islamic education model that is highly relevant for the elderly. This model demonstrates that Islamic education is not limited to the productive age but remains essential in later life as a means of spiritual development, meaning-making, and preparation for the hereafter. Therefore, *thariqah* education for the elderly not only holds religious value but also contributes significantly to improving their spiritual, psychological, and social well-being.

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